

Today in National Affairs

Eisenhower Is Seen Putting Service Ahead of Health

By DAVID LAWRENCE

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13.—What is Dwight Eisenhower's basic attitude toward public service—is it the health and convenience of an individual or the needs of one's country which must be given priority?

This question was once answered by Mr. Eisenhower in an episode that various persons in Washington are talking about now because it may throw light on the processes of the President's mind when he comes to the point of making a decision next year on whether or not to serve a second term.



Lawrence

It happened in 1942 when General Eisenhower was in London preparing for the invasion of North Africa. He had as chief of staff of the Allied forces Walter Bedell Smith, then a brigadier general. The latter had served in Washington as secretary of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff and also as United States Secretary of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

When Gen. Smith came to London in October, 1942, he took on a series of heavy conferences daily and, after one of these sessions, Winston Churchill warned Gen. Eisenhower that Gen. Smith was looking badly and ought to be sent to the hospital. It was not long afterward that the Chief Surgeon, Gen. Hawley, told Gen. Eisenhower that Gen. Smith had bleeding ulcers and that, unless he was sent home, Gen. Smith "might be dead in six months." "There'll be a lot of people dead in six months—in North Africa and in other places," was Gen. Eisenhower's reply as he turned down the suggestion. Gen. Smith, after two weeks of hospitalization, went on to serve as Ike's Chief of Staff for nearly four years until after the end of the war. He later was for three years United States Ambassador to Russia and then became head of the C. I. A. and subsequently Undersecretary of State. He is now an executive in private business.

There was in this instance, moreover, an intimate friendship which might have induced greater personal concern about the risks involved, but Dwight Eisenhower's point of view has always been that the needs of the United States come first.

It is true that the incident occurred during wartime, but the way things shape up today inside the government—with the Navy and the Air Force constantly on a twenty-four-hour alert basis—it is well known that the "cold war" is considered in some respects as dangerous as some stages of a "hot war." Certainly, in an international crisis, skillful leadership and experience are so essential that many close observers of Dwight Eisenhower's whole attitude toward public service now are saying that, if the country really wants him to serve on, a sense of duty will persuade him to do so.

mestic and foreign, as he always has been.

Representative Clarence Cannon, Democrat, of Missouri, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said after a legislative conference at the White House this week: "I was gratified to note the alertness, the aggressiveness of the President in conducting the conference. He was as active as any boy sixteen years old. He was the picture of health."

The opinion is crystallizing that, in the event that the doctors give Ike advice saying he is physically able to continue in office if he so desires, the President will not seek to be a candidate but will tell the American people something to this effect: "I had no desire to come to public office in the first place. I think there are able men to be found to succeed me. But if the people want me to serve, I shall obey their wish and serve if elected."

History May Repeat

It was Woodrow Wilson who in a world crisis in 1916—before America entered World War I—refrained from "seeking" a second term in the Presidency. He stood by his statement made as President-elect in February, 1913, when he wrote:

"I can approach the question from a perfectly impersonal point of view, because I shall most cheerfully abide by the judgment of my party and the public as to whether I shall be a candidate for the Presidency again in 1916. I absolutely pledge myself to resort to nothing but public opinion to decide that question."

Maybe history will repeat itself, and the people themselves will have to decide whether Dwight Eisenhower should be re-nominated.

He's Even Sharper

President Eisenhower's heart attack hasn't affected his mental capacity or acumen. Officials who have attended recent conferences with him, both of the Cabinet and the National Security Council, say that he is even sharper than before in cutting through lengthy debate or rambling remarks and bringing his conferees back to the main point under discussion. They say he is as penetrating in his analysis of public questions, do-